

THE JEWISH ADVANCE

Execute the Judgment of Truth and Peace within your Gates. הִקְמַת וּמִשְׁפָּט שְׁלוֹם בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם

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THE FALL OF BETHAR.

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE ADAPTED FROM THE HEBREW.

BY REV. DAVID STERN.

Continued.
XII.

"What benefit do I receive from my regal crown?" exclaimed Shimeon, with a broken heart, "and what good does it do me if thousands of men crouch and kneel at my feet? I have undertaken to be the liberator of my nation, whilst I cannot even help myself, nor have I the power to liberate my soul from its sorrow. Alas! all the regal honors and pleasures in the world can not recompense me for the great misfortune that came over me; but there is no use in crying like a child, or in wailing like a woman. No! it is the desire of my heart to perform great deeds, to distinguish myself as a mighty warrior, and to make my power known and felt by those who have deprived me of happiness. Many a time have I extended my arm and felled Romans by my mighty sword, like corn under the sickle of the harvestman; they have received chastisements which they will never forget, they suffered the humiliation of defeat and retreat. Courage and bravery have not yet deserted the Jewish heart; when the children of Jacob fight for their religion and country, they become like enraged lions charging against thieves who would deprive them of their whelps; they follow their enemies and pursue them, nor do they retreat until they have destroyed them or fallen in the contest. But alas! the heart of the nation is divided, they differ in their religious belief; from time immemorial, unjust hatred toward each other dwells in their breasts, and there exists among them an antipathy as silent and as destructive as the pestilence, which blunts their swords and takes the edge from their arrows. Of what avail is victory purchased by blood, if the advantage gained by it has no lasting value, and leads to no benefit? Why would not my nation follow my advice and fortify the ruined fortress of Casarea, in order to guard the entrances from the sea, and to prevent the enemy from reaching the land? And by what means did Rufus escape from death if he had not been assisted by some traitor? It is true that Severus, who has been defeated by me for the tenth time, will not dare to attack me whilst I remain in this fortified city, for he is afraid of my powerful arrows and deadly missiles; but neither dare I leave the city and fight him in the open field, because I have not full confidence in my own nation; and though I am positive that I have the power to defeat the strong enemy in the field, it is impossible for me or any one else to withstand an enemy who disguises himself as a friend! The disguised traitor is like a moth in a garment, consuming it silently, without a threatening sound or a warning whisper; he is like a robber watching in the dark, of whom no man knows until he falls into his clutches. Alas! that the days of miracles are no more, and the prophet Elijah does not reveal himself to me. Oh! may God grant that all the Jews unite together, for Rome would then again tremble before Jerusalem!"

He was yet sitting with his mind plunged in these mournful reflections, when the door opened, and the prophet Elijah stood by his side, and spoke these words in a solemn voice:

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, He who dwelleth between the Cherubim, become not disheartened nor discouraged, thy triumph will soon appear, and thy power will in a short time be revealed."

Thus spoke the prophet, and disappeared. Bar Cochba roused himself,

and thanked God with all his heart,—something that he had not done for many days, for his heart had turned into stone, and it was already a month since God's spirit had forsaken him. As he was engaged in deep meditation, he did not notice that it was Papius, the Samaritan, who had entered the chamber and spoken those consoling words; but after he awoke from profound reflections, he looked around and saw Papius standing respectfully near him, as a faithful servant stands before a king. Said the Samaritan:

"Pardon me, my king, that I disturbed the repose of your mind."

"Repose? What have I to do with repose?"

But he quickly repented of his words, for he reminded himself of the promise made to him by the prophet Elijah, a few moments ago; and thinking he might be helped through the instrumentality of Papius, he restrained his anger, and said:

"Do you believe that a burning mountain, that contains burning fires and destructive flames in its bowels, can rest and repose, even if it outwardly bears the appearance of repose and calmness? I was meditating how I could defeat the Romans once for all."

"You meditate, and I work!" replied Papius.

"How dare you charge me with being negligent in God's labor?"

"What is there that my heart will not dare in behalf of my country?" rejoined the Samaritan. "And now, my king, I pray you to listen to the great things that I have performed: You know in what high estimation I am held by my co-religionists—whom you despise,—and how they always obey my words. I have used many and divers other means to draw them towards you, and I have now persuaded them to unite with you and to fight your battles conjointly with your army. In the secrecy of their chambers they are armed even now, and waiting only for me to give them the final order to obey your commands."

At these words the king's eyes shone with a lustre of joy, and the impress which grief and sorrow had made upon him disappeared. His lips uttered thanks to Papius, who appeared to him as a saving angel in the day of trouble.

"Papius!" said the king, with a joyful countenance, "Papius! God's prophet predicted to me that the mighty power of your right hand would help and save me. I swear to you by my crown and regal staff, that if we will defeat our antagonist and conquer our enemies, you shall receive great rewards, you will be to me as a friend and brother, you will be second to the king only, and your co-religionists shall have the same rights as all the other citizens of my land."

"But with all this," said the Samaritan, before the king had yet finished his words, "but with all this, our main point will not yet have been reached."

"Who is there that can triumph over us if we combine our forces, and fight together against our enemies?"

"Discord and divided opinion can overcome us!" replied the Samaritan, in a mournful voice, forcing himself to conceal his hatred and antipathy towards Shimeon under a mask of cunning and flattery.

"Discord?" shouted the king angrily. "Almighty God of Israel, support and strengthen me this time, that I may execute thy vengeance, the vengeance of thy temple, and of thy nation, upon the sinful and barbarous Romans."

"Do you really believe that the Romans are the only ones who are our enemies, and the haters of our country?" said Papius, mournfully. "You should know that we have many enemies among the children of Israel, nay, even in this very city."

"In this city?" shouted the king; "you are either a lunatic or a calumniator!"

"I pray you, come with me," replied Papius, "come with me I pray you, my lord and king, and you shall be convinced I said nothing but the truth."

Unwillingly the king followed the Samaritan, who led him through intricate paths, until he brought him to the door of the great synagogue, when he said:

"I pray you to enter this miniature sanctuary, and your ears will convince you that my words are true."

The synagogue was filled with many of the most respectable persons of the city, who listened attentively to Rabbi Eliezer Hamodai, and their attention was so much engrossed in his words that they neither heard nor saw the king enter the building. Rabbi Eliezer stood near the holy ark, and in an argumentative but eloquent tone of voice he spoke these words:

"I warned you not to fight against the Romans, whom God put over our heads because of our numerous sins. I implored you, with all my might, to conclude a treaty of peace with them, but you would not listen to me, you would not heed my advice, and would not obey me; therefore have we been reached by great misfortunes, we have become enveloped by surging waters, and the messengers of God's wrath are constantly plunging us deeper and deeper in the jaws of destruction! And now listen to a vision that appeared unto me: Yesterday night, as I was sitting in ashes, with my heart broken and my eyes weeping for the sufferings of my nation, my soul was suddenly illumined with a light as brilliant as the lightnings of heaven, a sweet slumber came upon me, and I slept. My bodily eyes were closed, and the eyes of my spirit opened, and I saw a terrible vision, a vision of the great and holy day of judgment. I lifted my eyes heavenward and saw the God of justice sitting upon a magnificent throne, and seraphim encircled him; a lake of fire burned before the glorious throne, and myriads of angels stood around the edge of that awful lake. Suddenly the voice of the great trumpet was heard, and all nations and tongues from all parts of the world assembled with a terrible noise, with a frightful clamor and larum, to take their respective positions before the seat of judgment; it was as though the waves of the mighty seas were rolling over each other on a stormy day, as though the billows of the ocean were slashing against each other in a day of tempest. But above all this noise, the voice of the angel could be heard exclaiming: 'Let the Roman nation approach here!' The haughty Romans approached with their mighty weapons and triumphal crowns, and deposited these testimonials of their power and glory at the angel's feet; but the Ancient of days who sat upon the throne said:

"I am aware of the strength of your arm, you have imprinted its marks upon land and sea, you have subdued numerous countries with fire and sword, and who has not heard of your might? But I ask of you to tell me what you have done for my nation Israel? You see this Law which reposes in my bosom? Do you know that I only love those who are guided by its commands, and that I hate all those that hate this law and persecute its observers?"

The Romans stood there quivering and trembling, but finally they said:

"We have built bath houses, the like of which can not be found in all the world, we have laid out broad and beautiful avenues, and by the work of our hands and the study of our minds we invented all the pleasures known to humanity, and for whom did we undergo all this immense labor? Only for the

nation Israel, so that they might study the Law which Thou gavest to them and not to us, and so that they might observe all its commands in joy and affluence. For as Thou didst not give the law as an inheritance to us, and the commands were not intended for us, therefore have we assisted Thy nation Israel unto whom Thou didst reveal Thyself, and to whom Thou didst make known Thy laws."

But the God of judgment answered them:

"Fools! Can you conceal anything from me? I see the heart and search the reins; before you think your thought, I know it all. All that you built, invented and prepared, was only done in order to increase your power and might, and in order that you might enjoy carnal pleasures; there is not one among you who respected my law, there is not one among you who did not try to injure the children of Israel, the observers of that law."

The mighty and haughty Romans then departed from before the Judge of the universe in fear, confusion, and with their heads bowed down. * * I awoke, and streams of tears issued from my eyes, for I understand the interpretation of this dream. Alas! I see that the children of our nation direct their attention to the pleasures and luxuries of the world which are as transient as a shadow, but they do not even think of life eternal, of the life of the soul. They constantly desire to build luxurious palaces, to dress in silk and lace, to wear beautiful and rich garments, to adorn themselves with gold and jewels like the Roman aristocrats, and to rule over their brethren in peace and harmony. This is the reason why the Romans said to the omniscient God, that the house of Jacob participated in the pleasures which they had invented in their country. Woe unto me! The word that God spoke through his servants, the prophets, will soon be fulfilled upon the children of Israel! In a short time God will scatter us over all nations and spread us over all lands. O, house of Israel! return and repent, for why will you die, when God may yet listen to your petitions and grant your prayers? Pursue the path of peace and avoid war, remain in your country, even if you have to work hard for your living, and have to endure many sufferings. Israel, my nation, doest thou wish to move about in strange lands, like a bird that forsakes her nest and flies from branch to branch so that it may escape the arrows of its pursuers? If thou seekest for greatness, then thou wilt be a sojourner and wanderer in all countries of the earth, thy heart will find no rest and thy soul no repose; but if thou wilt be satisfied with bread to still thy hunger, then thy sorrows will change into joy, and thy misfortunes into gladness."

FORCE, LAW, AND DESIGN*.

A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY FOR NON-PHILOSOPHICAL READERS.

(Concluded.)

This is a short statement of the ethical, sociological, and political creed that is taught by those who find no design in nature, and make everything which gives man his dignity and self-respect, to be the product of social environment plus a more or less considerable variation of individual impulses. I need not argue that such a view destroys conscience and degrades man, that it makes the educated and cultured more selfish and grasping, and the uneducated more discontented and revolutionary. It claims to be very new, with its sounding abstractions and its scientific pretensions.

*By President Porter, D. D., LL. D., of Yale College, in the PRINCETON REVIEW for May.

It would be easy to show that it is as old as Lucretius and Hobbes, and that it is dangerous in proportion to the confidence with which its want of coherence is disguised and its moral tendencies are hidden, even from its advocates, by its high-sounding language, its rhetorical speciousness, and arrogant dogmatism.

The assumption of design in the universe justifies the faith of science in a personal and intelligent Creator. Justifies? I had almost said it requires this in order that the intellect may rest in a completed idea of a well rounded universe. A creator is a being who originates all the active beings, and imparts all the force or forces which exist, and who regulates their mutual activities by the laws which he has imposed upon them to accomplish the designs which he proposes, in the existence, the development, and activity of the material and spiritual universe. You may try in vain to stop short at any view of the origin of things without designing force, if you hope to provide for science. You may try the theory of force only, as Spencer does, and refer this origin of existence of things as he does to a persistent, unknown and unknowable power, unlimited in space and without beginning or end in time. But in this conception you have all the mystery that pertains to a self-existent personal Creator, with no advantages. You have a being who is himself unexplained, and who himself explains nothing. Why, somehow this unknowable power appears as acting upon a mass of matter which is in a state of unstable equilibrium, in which there is provided potentially all the events and beings which are to be developed in the future history of the universe. How it happens to be that each particle is in its place, with its wondrous potencies and promises of vegetable and animal life, of heroes and battles and philosophers, of lords and ladies gay, of saints and fiends, is not explained. How each happens regularly and progressively to act, no one can explain.

But all the future is here. Here is destiny, but no design. There is law here, because each particle that stands or moves in this star-dust must act with every other particle according to the capacities of each to condition the other. There must be progress steady and onward we are told, according to a law which sets in motion a set of constantly shifting and changing partners, every figure being more complicated than the other till the dance is out. Here again is destiny—the destiny of evolution, destination with perpetual progress, but no design.

Take now the other view. Let science recognize purpose, and there is explanation of law. The force of every individual agent is the condition of every other so far as they act in mutual dependence on one another. Admit evolution, even in the extreme form, concede that everything has been produced out of the original star-dust. Even then we need not ask which best satisfies the demands and the discoveries of science, which is the best working hypothesis—this theory of a personified force, or the theory of an intelligent Creator whose thought preceded the act that called the universe of forces into existence, fixed them under law, in obedience to designs of love that blessed beforehand those beings who were to interpret in science and imitate in art and honor in worship the one knowable God; knowable by them, because made in his image?

But our study has been too much prolonged. We conclude with the words of Lord Bacon: "It is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind to atheism, but a farther proceeding therein doth bring the mind back again to religion; for on the entrance of philosophy, when the second causes which are next unto the senses do offer themselves to the mind of man, if it dwell and stay in them it may induce some oblivion of the highest cause; but when a man passeth on farther, and seeth the dependence of causes and the works of Providence, then according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe that the highest link of nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair."

NOAH PORTER.